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EXAMINER

WEISS JR, JOSEPH FRANCIS

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3761

DATE MAILED: 07/28/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.
09/989,965

Applicant(s)
Martin et al

Examiner
Joseph Weiss

Art Unit
3761



-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136 (a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on Nov 21, 2001
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11; 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-94 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above, claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-94 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claims _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on Nov 21, 2001 is/are a) ☐ accepted or b) ☒ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgement is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some* c) ☐ None of:

- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
- ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

*See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

- 14) ☐ Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e).
a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s). 2-3 6) ☐ Other:

Art Unit: 3761

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Objections

1. The numbering of claims is not in accordance with 37 CFR 1.126 which requires the original numbering of the claims to be preserved throughout the prosecution. When claims are canceled, the remaining claims must not be renumbered. When new claims are presented, they must be numbered consecutively beginning with the number next following the highest numbered claims previously presented (whether entered or not).

Misnumbered claims 69-70 (second occurrence of claims 69-70 on page 39 of the spec) along with all subsequent claim from that point have been renumbered claims 71-94. This does not appear to affect the dependency of the claims, but applicant should verify and amend accordingly if necessary.

Drawings

2. The drawings are objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(a). The drawings must show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Therefore, the button style valve of claims 10 & 53 must be shown or the feature(s) canceled from the claim(s). No new matter should be entered.

A proposed drawing correction or corrected drawings are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

3. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

Art Unit: 3761

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

4. Claims 1-94 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

In regards to claim 1, line 9, what is "its"?

5. Claim 1 recites the limitation "the other" in the last line. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

In regards to claim 14 is the mega Pascal range of 0.15-10 the range or is it just a preference?

6. Claims 26-35 recites the limitation "the pressure drop" in line 1. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

In regards to claim 45, line 9, what is "its"?

7. Claim 45 recites the limitation "the other layer" in the last line. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

In regards to claim 57 is the mega Pascal range of 0.15-10 the range or is it just a preference?

8. Claims 69-78 recites the limitation "the pressure drop" in line 1. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Art Unit: 3761

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

9. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless -

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

10. Claims 85-92 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Gies et al (US 5355910) .

In regards to claim 85, Gies discloses a valve having a valve seat (20) comprising a seal surface and an orifice through which a fluid may pass (see fig 2), and a flexible flap (22) mounted to the valve seat that is fully capable such that the flap makes contact with the seat when the valve is in a closed position and such that the flap can flex away from the seal surface when an exhale flow stream passes through the valve the flexible flap comprising at least a first and second juxtaposed layers (24 & 40 respectively) wherein one of the layers is stiffer than the other (See abstract).

In regards to claim 86, Gies discloses the first layer (24) is disposed closer to the seal surface and than the second layer when the valve is closed and wherein the second layer (40) is stiffer than the first layer.

In regards to claim 87, Gies discloses a valve having a valve seat (20) comprising a seal surface and an orifice through which a fluid may pass (see fig 2), and a flexible flap (22) mounted

Art Unit: 3761

to the valve seat that is fully capable such that the flap makes contact with the seat when the valve is in a closed position and such that the flap can flex away from the seal surface when an exhale flow stream passes through the valve the flexible flap comprising at least a first and second juxtaposed layers (24 & 40 respectively) wherein one of the layers has a greater modulus of elasticity than the other (See abstract).

In regards to claim 88, Gies discloses the first layer (24) is disposed closer to the seal surface than the second layer when the valve is closed and wherein the second layer (40) has a greater modulus of elasticity than the first layer.

In regards to claim 89, Gies discloses a valve having a valve seat (20) comprising a seal surface and an orifice through which a fluid may pass (see fig 2), and a flexible flap (22) mounted to the valve seat that is fully capable such that the flap makes contact with the seat when the valve is in a closed position and such that the flap can flex away from the seal surface when an inhale flow stream passes through the valve the flexible flap comprising at least a first and second juxtaposed layers (24 & 40 respectively) wherein one of the layers is stiffer than the other (See abstract).

In regards to claim 90, Gies discloses the first layer (24) is disposed closer to the seal surface and than the second layer when the valve is closed and wherein the second layer (40) is stiffer than the first layer.

In regards to claim 91, Gies discloses a valve having a valve seat (20) comprising a seal surface and an orifice through which a fluid may pass (see fig 2), and a flexible flap (22) mounted

Art Unit: 3761

to the valve seat that is fully capable such that the flap makes contact with the seat when the valve is in a closed position and such that the flap can flex away from the seal surface when an inhale flow stream passes through the valve the flexible flap comprising at least a first and second juxtaposed layers (24 & 40 respectively) wherein one of the layers has a greater modulus of elasticity than the other (See abstract).

In regards to claim 92, Gies discloses the first layer (24) is disposed closer to the seal surface than the second layer when the valve is closed and wherein the second layer (40) has a greater modulus of elasticity than the first layer.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

11. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

12. Claims 1-9, 13-35, 40-52, 56-78, 83-84 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japuntich et al. (US 5325892) in view of Gies.

In regards to claim 1, Japuntich substantially discloses the instant application's claimed invention to include a mask body (12) adapted to fit over at least the nose & mouth of a wearer to create an interior gas space when worn and an exhalation valve (14) that is in fluid communication with the interior gas space, but does not explicitly disclose the detailed structure of the valve as

Art Unit: 3761

set forth in the claim. However, Gies disclose a valve having a valve seat (20) comprising a seal surface and an orifice through which a fluid may pass (see fig 2), and a flexible flap (22) mounted to the valve seat that is fully capable such that the flap makes contact with the seat when the valve is in a closed position and such that the flap can flex away from the seal surface when an exhale flow stream passes through the valve the flexible flap comprising at least a first and second juxtaposed layers (24 & 40 respectively) wherein one of the layers is stiffer than the other (See abstract). The references are analogous since they are from the same field of endeavor, the respiratory arts. At the time the instant application's invention was made, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have taken the features of Gies and used them with the device of Japuntich. The suggestion/motivation for doing so would have been to provide for a more effective valve operation to achieve the objects of invention contemplated by Japuntich (See Summary of the invention) which Gies stipulates such types of operable features are in accord with and more effectively/reliably obtainable via his reed valve structure (summary of invention, note recitations of enhanced seal characteristics, control of flow and operation of the valve). Therefore it would have been obvious to combine the references to obtain the instant application's claimed invention. Furthermore, such a feature is old and well known in the art as a "reed valve", and one of skill in the art would consider such to amount to a matter of mere obvious and routine choice of design in the form of interchangeable mechanical equivalency, rather than constitute a patently distinct inventive step, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

Art Unit: 3761

In regards to claim 2, the suggested device the first and second layers comprising first and second materials and respectively each having a different modulus of elasticity (note Gies disclosure of layer 24 being a soft flexible elastomer & layer 40 being a rigid plastic).

In regards to claim 3, the suggested device discloses the first layer (24) as closer to the seal surface than the second layer when the flap is positioned against the seal surface and wherein the second layer (40) has a greater MOE than the first layer.

In regards to claim 4, the suggested device discloses the first layer contacts the seal surface when the flap is positioned against the seal surface. (See Gies)

In regards to claim 5, the suggested device discloses the exhalation valve mounted to the mask body (See Japuntich, fig 1).

In regards to claim 6, the suggested device discloses a negative pressure half mask that has a fluid permeable mask body that contains a layer of filter material. (See fig 1 & supporting text).

In regards to claim 7, the suggested device discloses the exhalation valve as a flapper style exhalation valve.

In regards to claim 8, the suggested device discloses the flapper style valve as having a planar surface.

In regards to claim 9, the suggested device is fully capable of having the flexible flap as not being "pressed" against the seal surface under neutral conditions.

Art Unit: 3761

In regards to claim 13, the suggested device discloses the second layer having a modulus of elasticity that is greater than the first layer and wherein the first layer contacts the seal surface when the flap is positioned against the seal surface. (See Gies)

In regards to claims 14-19, the suggested device discloses the first layer having an MOE (Modulus of elasticity) that is lower relative to the MOE of the second layer but does not disclose the specific MOEs as set forth by applicant nor the MOE ratios between the layers as set forth by applicant.

It is noted that applicant's specification does not set forth these MOE values or ratios, as unexpectedly providing any new result or unexpectedly solving any new problem in the art over the prior art.

Accordingly, the examiner considers the selection of such to be a mere obvious matter of design choice and as such does not patently distinguish the claims over the prior art, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

In regards to claims 20-25, the suggested device discloses the first and second layers of the flap as having thickness but does not disclose the specific thicknesses as set forth by applicant in claims 20-25.

It is noted that applicant's specification does not set forth these thicknesses, as unexpectedly providing any new result or unexpectedly solving any new problem in the art over the prior art.

Art Unit: 3761

Accordingly, the examiner considers the selection of such to be a mere obvious matter of design choice and as such does not patently distinguish the claims over the prior art, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

In regards to claims 26-28 & 33-34, the suggested device discloses a pressure drop of less than 24.5 Pascal at flow levels above 40 liters per min & at 85 liters per minute. (See col 4 lines 4-10 & see example 4 of Japuntich).

In regards to claims 29-32 & 35, the suggested device discloses all the structure of the instantly claimed invention but does not set forth the intended pressure drop results as set forth by applicant at flow rate of 10 liters per minute. However one of ordinary skill would consider the suggested device as being fully capable of demonstrating the same pressure drop results at this same flow level because it performed in the same range at the other set forth flow rates and because it possesses all the structure applicant has set forth as necessary to perform under these given test conditions.

Accordingly, one of ordinary skill in the art would consider such to not constitute a patently distinct inventive step, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

In regards to claim 40, the suggested device discloses the first and second layers of materials being made out of polymeric materials. (Note Gies disclosure of use of plastics and elastomers and cross hatching of depicted in Gies' figures).

Art Unit: 3761

In regards to claim 41, the suggested device discloses use of a rubber in the first layer (note teaching of use of elastomers for layer 24) and the use of rigid materials for the second layer but does not disclose the use of poly-carbonate or polyethylene terephthalate..

It is noted that applicant's specification does not set forth the use of these specific rigid materials, as unexpectedly providing any new result or unexpectedly solving any new problem in the art over the prior art.

Accordingly, the examiner considers the selection of such to be a mere obvious matter of design choice and as such does not patently distinguish the claims over the prior art, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

In regards to claim 42, the suggested device discloses the claimed invention except for the use of styrene-butadiene-styrene block co-polymer for the first layer.

It is noted that applicant's specification does not set forth use of this specific rubber/elastomer, as unexpectedly providing any new result or unexpectedly solving any new problem in the art over the prior art.

Accordingly, the examiner considers the selection of such to be a mere obvious matter of design choice and as such does not patently distinguish the claims over the prior art, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

In regards to claim 43, the references noted above substantially disclose the claimed invention's structure but does not claim the specific valve efficiency value as set forth in the claim.

Art Unit: 3761

It is noted that applicant's specification does not set forth this value, as unexpectedly providing any new result or unexpectedly solving any new problem in the art over the prior art.

Accordingly, the examiner considers the selection of such to be a mere obvious matter of design choice and as such does not patently distinguish the claims over the prior art, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary. Furthermore, such a feature is old and well known in the art, and one of ordinary skill in the art would consider such to amount to a matter of mere obvious and routine choice of design, rather than constitute a patently distinct inventive step, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

In regards to claim 44, the references noted above substantially disclose the claimed invention's structure but does not claim the specific valve efficiency value as set forth in the claim.

It is noted that applicant's specification does not set forth this value, as unexpectedly providing any new result or unexpectedly solving any new problem in the art over the prior art.

Accordingly, the examiner considers the selection of such to be a mere obvious matter of design choice and as such does not patently distinguish the claims over the prior art, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary. Furthermore, such a feature is old and well known in the art, and one of ordinary skill in the art would consider such to amount to a matter of mere obvious and routine choice of design, rather than constitute a patently distinct inventive step, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

In regards to claim 45, Japuntich substantially discloses the instant application's claimed invention to include a mask body (12) adapted to fit over at least the nose & mouth of a wearer to

Art Unit: 3761

create an interior gas space when worn and an exhalation valve (14) that is in fluid communication with the interior gas space, but does not explicitly disclose the detailed structure of the valve as set forth in the claim . However, Gies disclose a valve having a valve seat (20) comprising a seal surface and an orifice through which a fluid may pass (see fig 2), and a flexible flap (22) mounted to the valve seat that is fully capable such that the flap makes contact with the seat when the valve is in a closed position and such that the flap can flex away from the seal surface when an exhale flow stream passes through the valve the flexible flap comprising at least a first and second juxtaposed layers (24 & 40 respectively) wherein one of the layers has a greater modulus of elasticity than the other (See abstract). The references are analogous since they are from the same field of endeavor, the respiratory arts. At the time the instant application's invention was made, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have taken the features of Gies and used them with the device of Japuntich. The suggestion/motivation for doing so would have been to provide for a more effective valve operation to achieve the objects of invention contemplated by Japuntich (See Summary of the invention) which Gies stipulates such types of operable features are in accord with and more effectively/reliably obtainable via his reed valve structure (summary of invention, note recitations of enhanced seal characteristics, control of flow and operation of the valve). Therefore it would have been obvious to combine the references to obtain the instant application's claimed invention. Furthermore, such a feature is old and well known in the art as a "reed valve", and one of skill in the art would consider such to amount to a matter of mere obvious and routine choice of design in the form of interchangeable mechanical

Art Unit: 3761

equivalency, rather than constitute a patently distinct inventive step, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

In regards to claim 46, the suggested device discloses the first layer (24) as closer to the seal surface than the second layer when the flap is positioned against the seal surface and wherein the second layer (40) has a greater MOE than the first layer.

In regards to claim 47, the suggested device discloses the first layer contacts the seal surface when the flap is positioned against the seal surface. (See Gies)

In regards to claim 48, the suggested device discloses the exhalation valve mounted to the mask body (See Japuntich, fig 1).

In regards to claim 49, the suggested device discloses a negative pressure half mask that has a fluid permeable mask body that contains a layer of filter material. (See fig 1 & supporting text).

In regards to claim 50, the suggested device discloses the exhalation valve as a flapper style exhalation valve.

In regards to claim 51, the suggested device discloses the flapper style valve as having a planar surface.

In regards to claim 52, the suggested device is fully capable of having the flexible flap as not being "pressed" against the seal surface under neutral conditions.

Art Unit: 3761

In regards to claim 56, the suggested device discloses the second layer having a modulus of elasticity that is greater than the first layer and wherein the first layer contacts the seal surface when the flap is positioned against the seal surface. (See Gies)

In regards to claims 57-62, the suggested device discloses the first layer having an MOE (Modulus of elasticity) that is lower relative to the MOE of the second layer but does not disclose the specific MOEs as set forth by applicant nor the MOE ratios between the layers as set forth by applicant.

It is noted that applicant's specification does not set forth these MOE values or ratios, as unexpectedly providing any new result or unexpectedly solving any new problem in the art over the prior art.

Accordingly, the examiner considers the selection of such to be a mere obvious matter of design choice and as such does not patently distinguish the claims over the prior art, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

In regards to claims 63-68, the suggested device discloses the first and second layers of the flap as having thickness but does not disclose the specific thicknesses as set forth by applicant in claims 63-68.

It is noted that applicant's specification does not set forth these thicknesses, as unexpectedly providing any new result or unexpectedly solving any new problem in the art over the prior art.

Art Unit: 3761

Accordingly, the examiner considers the selection of such to be a mere obvious matter of design choice and as such does not patently distinguish the claims over the prior art, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

In regards to claims 69-71 & 76-77, the suggested device discloses a pressure drop of less than 24.5 Pascal at flow levels above 40 liters per min & at 85 liters per minute. (See col 4 lines 4-10 & see example 4 of Japuntich).

In regards to claims 72-75 & 78, the suggested device discloses all the structure of the instantly claimed invention but does not set forth the intended pressure drop results as set forth by applicant at flow rate of 10 liters per minute. However one of ordinary skill would consider the suggested device as being fully capable of demonstrating the same pressure drop results at this same flow level because it performed in the same range at the other set forth flow rates and because it possesses all the structure applicant has set forth as necessary to perform under these given test conditions.

Accordingly, one of ordinary skill in the art would consider such to not constitute a patently distinct inventive step, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

In regards to claim 83, the references noted above substantially disclose the claimed invention's structure but does not claim the specific valve efficiency value as set forth in the claim.

It is noted that applicant's specification does not set forth this value, as unexpectedly providing any new result or unexpectedly solving any new problem in the art over the prior art.

Art Unit: 3761

Accordingly, the examiner considers the selection of such to be a mere obvious matter of design choice and as such does not patently distinguish the claims over the prior art, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary. Furthermore, such a feature is old and well known in the art, and one of ordinary skill in the art would consider such to amount to a matter of mere obvious and routine choice of design, rather than constitute a patently distinct inventive step, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

In regards to claim 84, the references noted above substantially disclose the claimed invention's structure but does not claim the specific valve efficiency value as set forth in the claim.

It is noted that applicant's specification does not set forth this value, as unexpectedly providing any new result or unexpectedly solving any new problem in the art over the prior art.

Accordingly, the examiner considers the selection of such to be a mere obvious matter of design choice and as such does not patently distinguish the claims over the prior art, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary. Furthermore, such a feature is old and well known in the art, and one of ordinary skill in the art would consider such to amount to a matter of mere obvious and routine choice of design, rather than constitute a patently distinct inventive step, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

13. Claims 10 & 53 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japuntich & Gies as applied to claims 1 & 45 above, and further in view of Matheson (US 2895472).

In regards to claims 10 & 53, the suggested device substantially discloses the instant application's claimed invention, but does not explicitly disclose use of the old and well known

Art Unit: 3761

push button style disc valve as the exhalation valve. However, Matheson disclose such (note valve 10). The references are analogous since they are from the same field of endeavor, the respiratory arts. At the time the instant application's invention was made, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have taken the features of Matheson and used them with the suggested device. The suggestion/motivation for doing so would have been because push button disc valves are known interchangeable mechanical equivalents to flapper disc valves in the respiratory arts for serving as exhalation/one way check valves. Therefore it would have been obvious to combine the references to obtain the instant application's claimed invention. Furthermore, such a feature is old and well known in the art, and one of skill in the art would consider such to amount to a matter of mere obvious and routine choice of design, rather than constitute a patently distinct inventive step, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

14. Claims 11-12, 36-37, 54-55 & 79-80 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japuntich & Gies as applied to claims 1 & 45 above, and further in view of Herlihy (US 5285816).

In regards to claims 11 & 54 the suggested device discloses the instant application's claimed invention, but does not explicitly disclose the use of a third layer that has substantially the same stiffness as the first layer. However, Herlihy disclose such (see figs 1, 3, 7-8 and supporting text). The references are analogous since they are from the same field of endeavor, the fluid handling/valving arts. At the time the instant application's invention was made, it would have

Art Unit: 3761

been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have taken the features of Herlihy and used them with the suggested device. The suggestion/motivation for doing so would have been to optimize actuation of the valve by having an elastomeric bilayer serve as the hinge without use/interference by the stiffer/more rigid layer. Therefore it would have been obvious to combine the references to obtain the instant application's claimed invention. Furthermore, such a feature is old and well known in the art, and one of skill in the art would consider such to amount to a matter of mere obvious and routine choice of design, rather than constitute a patently distinct inventive step, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

In regards to claim 12, 55 the suggested device discloses a symmetric flexible flap w/ respect to the second layer and wherein the second layer is stiffer than the first & third layers.
(See Herlihy)

In regards to claim 36, 79, the suggested device discloses an ABA structure wherein layer B is stiffer than the A layers.

In regards to claim 37, 80 the suggested device discloses ABA' structure wherein layer B is stiffer than the A & A' layers and the A layer is located closer to the seal surface than the B layer.

15. Claims 38-39 & 81-82 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japuntich & Gies as applied to claims 1 & 45 above, and further in view of Airhart (US 3994319).

In regards to claims 38-39 & 81-82 the suggested device discloses the instant application's claimed invention, but does not explicitly disclose the use of a third distinct or "C" layer and in

Art Unit: 3761

regards to claims 39 & 81 is stiffer than the A or B layers & is located closer to the seal surface than the A and B layers. However, Airhart disclose such (note how subsequent layers reinforce the layer that contacts the sealing surface). The references are analogous since they are from the same field of endeavor, the fluid handling/valving arts. At the time the instant application's invention was made, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have taken the features of Airhart and used them with the suggested device. The suggestion/motivation for doing so would have been to reduce elasticity to optimize actuation of the valve using a more rigidly layered flap valve element. Therefore it would have been obvious to combine the references to obtain the instant application's claimed invention. Furthermore, such a feature is old and well known in the art, and one of skill in the art would consider such to amount to a matter of mere obvious and routine choice of design, rather than constitute a patently distinct inventive step, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

16. Claims 93 & 94 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gies et al as applied to claims 89 & 91 respectively above, and further in view of Shigematsu et al (US 5829433).

In regards to claim 93, Gies substantially discloses the instant application's claimed invention, but does not explicitly disclose use of the valve in a filter mask for controlling inspiration. However, Shigrematsu disclose such an arrangement (see valve 25 & supporting text). The references are analogous since they are from the same field of endeavor, the respiratory arts. At the time the instant application's invention was made, it would have been

Art Unit: 3761

obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have taken the features of Shigematsu and used them with the device of Gies. The suggestion/motivation for doing so would have been because Shigematsu discloses the combination of a valve for controlling inhalation with a valve in a filter mask and Gies discloses the subcombination of an valve that is fully capable of controlling inhalation . Therefore it would have been obvious to combine the references to obtain the instant application's claimed invention. Furthermore, such a feature is old and well known in the art, and one of skill in the art would consider such to amount to a matter of mere obvious and routine choice of design, rather than constitute a patently distinct inventive step, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

In regards to claim 94, Gies substantially discloses the instant application's claimed invention, but does not explicitly disclose use of the valve in a filter mask for controlling inspiration. However, Shigermatsu disclose such an arrangement (see valve 25 & supporting text). The references are analogous since they are from the same field of endeavor, the respiratory arts. At the time the instant application's invention was made, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have taken the features of Shigematsu and used them with the device of Gies. The suggestion/motivation for doing so would have been because Shigematsu discloses the combination of a valve for controlling inhalation with a valve in a filter mask and Gies discloses the subcombination of an valve that is fully capable of controlling inhalation . Therefore it would have been obvious to combine the references to obtain the instant application's claimed invention. Furthermore, such a feature is old and well known in the art, and

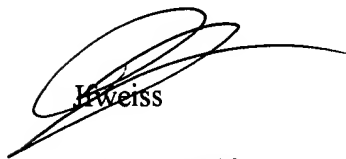
Art Unit: 3761

one of skill in the art would consider such to amount to a matter of mere obvious and routine choice of design, rather than constitute a patently distinct inventive step, barring a convincing showing of evidence to the contrary.

Conclusion

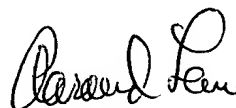
17. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. US 6584976, RE37974, 6210266, 3983900

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to Joseph F. Weiss, Jr., whose telephone number is (703) 305-0323. The Examiner can normally be reached from Monday-Friday from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM. If attempts to reach the Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's supervisor, Weilun Lo, can be reached at telephone number (703) 308-1957. The official fax number for this group is (703) 305-3590 or x3591. Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application should be directed to the Group receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0858.



J. Weiss

July 21, 2003



Aaron J. Lewis
Primary Examiner